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DE RUEHBS #1249 2591535
ZNY CCCCC ZZH
R 161535Z SEP 09
FM AMEMBASSY BRUSSELS
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC 9455
INFO RUEHPS/AMEMBASSY PRISTINA 0013
RUEHBW/AMEMBASSY BELGRADE 0001
RUEHBS/USEU BRUSSELS
RUCNDT/USMISSION USUN NEW YORK 0297

C O N F I D E N T I A L BRUSSELS 001249

SIPDIS

STATE FOR EUR/WE AND EUR/SCE:MTOUSSAINT, PPFEUFFER

E.O. 12958: DECL: 09/11/2019

TAGS: [AORC](#) [PREL](#) [ICJ](#) [KV](#) [BE](#)

SUBJECT: BELGIUM WILL NOT PARTICIPATE IN ORAL ARGUMENTS ON
KOSOVO INDEPENDENCE AT ICJ

REF: STATE 90199

Classified By: Political-Economic Counselor Richard Eason, reason 1.4(b)
) and (d).

¶1. (C) On September 8, Poloff met with Luc Liebaut, Director of the Department of South-East Europe in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Liebaut said that Belgium will not participate in oral arguments on Kosovo's declaration of independence in the International Court of Justice (ICJ). Liebaut said that the Ministry's position is that Belgium does not have to justify its decision to recognize Kosovo, which he termed a legitimate, but politically based, decision by the GOB.

¶2. (C) Liebaut observed that as in Bosnia, there is little chance that Kosovo will be able to rapidly advance to EU membership and a similar standard of governance as exists in the rest of Europe. The Kosovars have little experience in administration, he said, and no clue what is needed to integrate with European norms. The country's institutions are very weak and the implementation of legislation is poor. Many, if not most, governmental decisions are made without transparency and local clans have inordinate power. While Macedonia, Serbia and Montenegro are making progress toward eventual membership in the EU, Kosovo has not even reached a stage where a visa facilitation agreement with the EU is possible, he said. Nevertheless, he said, the Kosovars are becoming frustrated because they think highly of themselves and tend to put the blame on others for their failings. Their political leadership is "spoiled", he concluded.

¶3. (C) Asked about Belgian views of the future of KFOR, the NATO operation for security in Kosovo, Liebaut said that the 14500 troops now in Kosovo can be gradually reduced. However, KFOR is needed so long as the Serbian parallel institutions still exist, he said. He observed that the European Rule of Law Mission (EULEX), the EU's assistance program for judicial, police and customs improvements, has a role in helping Pristina to assert authority over the whole of Kosovo. However, he expressed concern that EULEX has been "stabbed in the back" by the Kosovo government and had its legitimacy questioned, its reputation demonized and its property vandalized. Cooperation and help is needed from the Kosovo government, he said, or EULEX will suffer the same gradual diminution of authority that affected UNMIK, the UN program for governing Kosovo until its own structures were deemed sufficient. This will be unfortunate, he said, because EULEX has the best chance for guiding Kosovo toward eventual EU membership. Liebaut said he will appreciate United States efforts to help the Kosovo leadership understand the importance of EULEX to Kosovo's future.

GUTMAN

